FALLOUT FROM BLACK FRIDAY CONTINUES

Fallout from online poker's Black Friday continues

Last week, Full Tilt Poker was shut down by the Alderney Gambling Control Commission; this is the latest twist in the campaign against on-line poker by the American authorities.

Screenshot of an online poker site.

Since the FBI and Department Of Justice raided and shut down poker site domains in April, there has been a noticeable downswing in traffic. Although one of the larger sites, Full Tilt Poker had clearly been hit harder than PokerStars, although like

PokerStars it ran a well patronised on-line championship, and there was still the promise of its participation in major live events as well as its continued sponsorship of professionals.

All that changed last week when suddenly and without warning, players were unable to log onto the site; furthermore, the company appears to have sent out no e-mails to its massive user base nor even to have issued so much as a press release. Fortunately, there is Google News, Usenet, and a forum or five hundred for poker players to whine about their bad beats and to generally talk shop.

The bottom line is that Full Tilt Poker has been hit by a double whammy. On Wednesday, the Alderney Gambling Control Commission suspended the company's gaming licence, which resulted in its immediate shutdown. Although the Channel Island of Alderney is far removed from American jurisdiction, even the least conspiratorially minded of poker players will probably detect the hidden hand of the Great Satan reaching out to put the kibosh on the site.

Whether or not that is the case, most players simply want to get back to the tables, and according to one dedicated British gambling news site, PokerStars has already picked up 27% of Full Tilt's players. Certainly, it has been doing brisk business over the past few days. Some players play on both sites, indeed many poker players have accounts of several or many sites, but unless Full Tilt can resolve this situation soon, it could literally go down the tubes. There will be a hearing in London on July 26 which will hopefully do this, but things don't look good in the meantime.

There is said to be around $150 million of bankrolls outstanding to players in the US, but whose fault is that? Clearly not the company's.

Full Tilt Poker is not the only gaming site that is in the doldrums. According to a leading poker affiliate in response to a query about Absolute Poker: "We are not offering Absolute to new sign ups.

As far as we are aware Absolute is still going however we would advise you not to play there".

At least two affiliates are attempting to cash in on the expected demise of Full Tilt by offering special promotions for other sites. And just for good measure, two weeks ago, the President of Poland signed into law a bill that will make on-line poker illegal in that country, apparently on moral grounds.

It remains to be seen if American poker players are the least bothered about this, but the Washington-based Poker Players Alliance is continuing its campaign against domestic prohibition. Its latest press release announces that its Executive Director and Vice President will be attending the World Series of Poker in Las Vegas on July 7 where they will be giving interviews and continuing their public relations offensive. Although they will be preaching to the converted, it is not the public they need to convince.

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